Mathuradas Trikamji

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# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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## LAND-GIFTS MISSION

The news-item from the Hyderabad Government Information Bureau, published in *Harijan* of 23rd June '51, regarding the donation of the land received in Telangana by Shri Vinoba and the personnel appointed for its disposal, being incomplete and inaccurate, the following is published for public information:

1. The total land received by Shri Vinoba in Telangana is 12,000 acres. He has appointed a special committee for fulfilling the object of the gifts, and laid down the following rules for its work:

1. *Name*: The name of the Samiti (Committee) shall be "Bhu-Dan-Yajna Samiti" (Land-Gifts Mission Committee).

2. *Members*: The following shall be the members of the Samiti:

(1) Shri Umtal Keshavrao Vakil, Barkatpura, Hyderabad,

(2) Shri Sangam Laxmibai, Hyderabad,

(3) Shri K. Kodandaram Reddy, Bhongir.

3. *Convener*: Shri Umtal Keshavrao shall be the Convener of this Samiti.

4. *Field of Operation*: The field of operation of the Samiti shall be the Hyderabad State.

5. *Objects*: (a) to distribute land received hitherto in the course of *bhu-dana-yajna* among the landless people; (b) to acquire more land-gifts from the landholders and distribute them among the landless.

6. *Method of Distribution*: (a) Ordinarily, the basis of distribution shall be, either one acre of wet land per family, or one acre of dry land per individual. But the Samiti shall have the power to depart from this rule as might be needed by a particular local condition; (b) while distributing, the Samiti shall as a rule assign a piece of land to the very cultivators, who are in possession of it at present. But the Samiti shall have power to take necessary steps for settlement of disputes, if any, in respect of gifted lands.

7. In furtherance of its work the Samiti shall have power to do all necessary things to secure public or government co-operation in the work and to correspond etc. with the Government and others.

8. *Records*: The Samiti shall keep proper records incorporating the names of donors, the land donated by each of them, the names of the donees, and the land allotted to each of them, and other necessary details.

9. *Duties of the Convener*: The Convener shall convene the meetings from time to time as and when necessary, maintain the minutes of their proceedings, carry out their decisions and carry on correspondence and other secretarial work.

10. In matters referred to above and also others pertaining to *bhumi-dana-yajna* the Samiti shall consult me (Vinoba) from time to time, and act under my guidance.

2. In order to continue the work started by Shri Vinoba, the workers who met together at Mancherial on 8-6-'51 took the following pledge:

"We, the workers who have gathered here at the Sarvodaya Sammelan at Mancherial hereby pledge that we will continue to the best of our ability the *bhu-dana-yajna* (Land-Gift Mission) initiated by Shri Vinoba and strive for its success on a large scale."

3. The All Hyderabad Congress Committee at its session at Vikarabad on 15th June, 1951 passed the following resolution unanimously:

"This session of the All Hyderabad Congress Committee expresses its earnest gratitude to Poojya Vinoba Bhave, for the valuable services rendered by him in his walking tour in Telangana and for effectively using the weapon of love and non-violence in solving agrarian problems as against the one based on hatred and violence preached and practised by Communists to the detriment of the country and appeals to the people of Hyderabad and particularly the Congress workers to continue the pious work of *bhu-dana* started by him."

D. M.

## ON WAY TO SHIVARAMPALLI
(A DIARY OF VINOBA'S ITINERARY)

XVI

*April 6, Hyderabad* (Thirtieth halt, 7 miles)

The reception accorded to Vinoba by the people of Hyderabad was warm and extra-ordinary, indicative of their sentiments and feelings for him. From Hussein Sagar to Chaman, the people had gathered at several places at that early hour to have a glimpse of Vinobaji. *Ramadhun* rent the air all along the way. We reached Chaman Bagh at 7 a.m. It presented a beautiful sight on the bank of the river Musa. It may be recalled that Gandhiji's ashes were deposited here before they were immersed into the *Sangam*. Vinoba had a busy day. Visitors had crowded from the morning. Congregational spinning was arranged in the afternoon in which about 150 persons participated.

Several questions were answered at the workers' meeting. A friend who has devoted his life to nature-cure work asked how it was that the nature-cure method had not gained due recognition in the country. Realizing the agony of the worker's heart, Vinoba said, "We can swear that we have not touched any cloth other than *khadi* during the last thirty years. Can we say the same thing regarding nature-cure?" But, in order to console the worker and strengthen his faith, he continued, "we have to do what is right and leave the result to God. This is all the more necessary in the field of nature cure. Our patients, if they are benefited by nature cure will

themselves work as our propagandists. The prestige of our work is then bound to increase."

Another worker asked, "The term *Harijan* has these days become a synonym for a scavenger. Should we not adopt that title with our names?"

"If you don't differentiate between man and man, you are free to do so," replied Vinobaji.

*Q.*: Several Congress leaders are in the Government today. Is it not inconsistent to be a member of the Sarvodaya Samaj and at the same time hold a place in the Government?

*Vinoba*: *Sarvodaya* is an idea. It is neither a body of laws, nor a sect. It is the star guiding the direction in which one has to proceed. In order to be a member of the Arya Samaj you must observe certain rules that are peculiar to it, because the Arya Samaj is a sect. *Sarvodaya* is not so. There are no rules for admission to the Sarvodaya Samaj. You cannot say that a smoker or a drinker cannot be *Sarvodaya*-minded. Nor can you say that he can be. Let him judge it for himself. Let every one apply as hard a test to himself as he can, but let no one judge others. The Sarvodaya-Samajists, therefore, can be found in all ranks of life; both in the Government and in Commerce.

*Q.*: Will the Sarvodaya Samaj be made a political party?

*Vinoba*: The Sarvodaya Samaj is a collective term for only individuals. It is not meant for an institution or an organization. People may join the Samaj in crores in their individual capacity. But they cannot fight elections on a Sarvodaya ticket (that is, in the name of the Sarvodaya Samaj).

*Q.*: Should the constructive programme be executed by public institutions alone, or can it be carried on also by Governments?

*Vinoba*: It can be carried on by both. The methods will differ. Government cannot adopt a programme which the people do not approve of, even though it might regard it in their interest. This can be done only by reformers. The latter decide what is good and useful for the public even if there is opposition to it by the people, in the hope that ultimately the people will be converted to it. Public workers not only serve the people but go ahead and train the people. But governments can do only what the people want; e.g. Government would not be able to enforce Prohibition, if people really do not want it. But leaders and social workers can still try for it. This means, that the Government can do only that constructive work which is widely acceptable to the people. But a worker can take up a revolutionary programme.

*Q.*: *Khadi* does not seem to make any progress inspite of our efforts. What is your opinion about getting it propagated with Government aid?

*Vinoba*: Tea did not require any Government help for its propagation. A private individual like Lipton was quite able to carry it to every house. *Khaddar* cannot be so easily propagated. The programme of *khadi* is against the weather of the present time. But its seed has been planted. People doubted if it would even sprout. Such activities are difficult to succeed in the beginning. It was Gandhiji's unique genius which introduced ideas about *khadi*, Harijan-*seva* and such other activities into the current of politics like so many streams. If Government determine to help *khadi* work exclusively I would not oppose the idea. But I have my own doubts. If they declare that they did not want mills and that they would have *khaddar* exclusively, it is possible that their position might get shaken, and they might be challenged to face an election, in which they might be defeated by the protagonists of mills.

A friend interrupted: "Vinobaji, then men like you must stand for election!"

"I will be the worst failure," was the prompt reply which provoked a loud laughter from the audience.

Prayer followed the workers' meeting. Under the cloudless blue sky, on the greens of the garden, ten thousand people listened to the message of *Sarvodaya*. The usual two-minute post-prayer silence was remarkably successful.

### Exclusive Harijan Hostels

After briefly stating the purpose, which led to his foot-tour to Hyderabad, and inviting the people to attend the Sarvodaya Conference at Shivarampalli and participate in its programmes there, and thanking the people for showering their great love on him, Vinoba referred to the visit he had paid to a Harijan hostel on his way. There were some thirty boarders in the hostel. They were all Harijans. Vinoba enquired whether there were any students from other castes also in the hostel, and was pained to find that the boarding was meant exclusively for Harijan boys. "You cannot wipe out untouchability by running separate hostels for Harijan boys. They might have been necessary at one time, but now they have outlived their purpose. Harijans should be accommodated in all hostels irrespective of caste and not treated as animals of a different species! If we still continue the old method, we shall make the problem of untouchability even more difficult than what it is. I am told that this is not the only hostel of this type in this State, and that the system is maintained under the belief that by providing separate arrangements for Harijan boys they are serving the Harijan cause. I can understand your motive of service and I also know that you too have a keen desire to eradicate untouchability. Nevertheless, this is not the way to create in our country a unified society."

Vinoba said that they had to work for a harmonious and integrated society. It was not unexpected if there were separate divisions in our huge society. According to their aptitudes and talents people would carry on different occupations. But in spite of such diversity there should be a unity of heart making the whole society look one and indivisible. "At present, we have fallen so low that even in elections we select candidates and cast votes on considerations of their caste and religion. This is all regrettable. Let us remember that we have to extricate ourselves out of this."

### India's Special Mission

This could be achieved, Vinoba said, only when they developed an all-India outlook and looked at the people as Indians only. Indeed, they should develop a universal outlook regarding all men as members of a single human family. Only then would the people be unified into a nation and qualify themselves for being a fit instrument to carry out India's special mission in the world. He believed that God had designed India for a supreme task. Had that not been His design, it was inexplicable that He should have set such broken and downcast people as they on the way to progress through non-violence, should have freed them from the yoke of a mighty foreign power, and placed power into their hands. Why should he have enacted such a drama? All that showed that it was His will to spread into the world through India an idea which the whole world hungered after.

After the death of Gandhiji, Vinoba told the audience, they had adopted one of his words, namely *Sarvodaya*. It had caught the imagination of the people all over India and even abroad. Gandhiji's admirers abroad had expressed their desire to join the Sarvodaya Samaj and had even suggested that a suitable mark should be designed to make them distinguishable as *sevaks* of the Sarvodaya Samaj and lovers of non-violence. This showed that there was a widespread desire to create a world society, however small, of people who believed that the welfare and salvation of man lay through non-violence alone. It was a very small body for the present. But there was no doubt that it would increase in the future.

### Science and Violence

Explaining the reason for this, Vinoba said that science was bound to develop in the future. He was often asked whether there was any prospect and scope for the advancement of non-violence in the present world. His reply was that it alone had it in a world of science. It was evident that the world definitely desired the progress of science and did not want to rot in the same old condition. It was characteristic of science that as it progressed it tended to unify all into a single society. And science gave into the hands of man a power which, if it was not united with non-violence, would imperil the very existence of mankind. Therefore man was faced now with the question of making a choice not between non-violence and violence but between science and violence. If he preferred science he should give up violence. If he preferred violence, he must bid farewell to science. Science and violence could not go together. If both of them joined hands and tried to prosper, they would bring the end of humanity on the earth.

Declaring his own preference for science, Vinoba said that he had great faith in it and saw the potentialities in it of filling life with love and base it on co-operation and knowledge. It could raise man's level of thought. He was, therefore, of opinion that with the progress of science, violence had to go, and the determination to abandon violence was essential for every one who loved science. If he did not do so, Vinoba said, he would become an enemy of science. Vinoba saw hope for non-violence in the fact that the world at present desired the progress of science.

People the world over, in India and outside, were anxious to know and find the non-violent way of dealing with the human problems. And they felt that since Gandhiji had made his experiments in non-violence here, India might show that way. The world looked to India and placed its hope on her.

### Hyderabad, a Characteristic State

Vinoba next referred to the peculiar position of the State and the city of Hyderabad and emphasized the responsibilities of the people. He felt prompted to say that Hyderabad was India in miniature. It had all the rich diversity of life in India. Hindus and Muslims were there in large numbers, and there was also a fair proportion of the followers of other religions. Many different languages of India were represented there. The State and the city, therefore, were like an image of India. And if they succeeded in solving certain problems there that would give others the key to solve similar problems throughout India and the world. The responsibilities of the Hyderabadis, therefore, were quite heavy, and they had to be alive to them.

They had to realize that they inhabited a city which represented the whole of India. If they could set there an example of honest and harmonious living and solve the various local problems, they would have done great service to the whole country. They had their own government now. It offered them a rare opportunity to do their duty. Some were afraid that the workers there had not enough experience. Vinoba said that was a groundless misapprehension. The sixty-year long experience of the Congress was at their disposal, to which they could add their own, so that, in effect, they would be found to have even more experience than the rest of India. They were in the position of the son of a great savant, who naturally inherited the learning of the latter and then improved on it. Thus Hyderabad was well fitted to lead the way to the rest of India.

In the course of his journey through Hyderabad, he had seen numerous villages on the way which he felt reluctant to take leave of. Everywhere they overwhelmed him with their love and cordiality, and he had the feeling that if the workers went there and lived in their midst, they could give shape to their ideal of the self-sufficient village republic. Their backward condition, the lack of good roads and other modern facilities of which they complained were no hindrance. On the other hand they would help them achieve their end. For the facilities which they made so much of were not an unmixed good. They were the carriers of many evils as well. It was fortunate that those villages were still free from these modern evils. Hence, if the workers settled there and worked for their betterment, they could usher in *Ramarajya* in each village. Vinoba wished that the people would realize how the circumstances in their area gave them the chance of giving a lead to the whole of India. The workers should in no way feel inferior to others. Let them regard themselves as devotees of God devoted to carrying out His will. In the surging tide of the service to the people, all differences would be submerged. There would be peace and contentment, a gain to Hyderabad and an inspiration to India.

### Common Nagari Script

To illustrate the point, Vinoba referred to the language problem of India and how they could help towards its solution by adopting the Nagari script for all the five languages, Marathi, Kannad, Telugu, Urdu and Hindi which were spoken in the State. The various languages of India were not much different from one another, but their scripts were, and these acted like walls screening one from the other. One common script for all would facilitate their study and bring them nearer one another. He referred to his own experience in this connection and the great difficulty he had to encounter, because of the difference in scripts. If the State or a Publication House took up the work of publishing good literature of every language in the Nagari script, it would be a great service to India.

If Urdu adopted the Nagari script, it would automatically influence Hindi and that would be an insurance against Hindi becoming artificially Sanskritized. Vinoba did not mean that Urdu or Kannad scripts should be altogether abandoned. These scripts had their own merits and they should continue. But if along with these they also accepted the Nagari script and used it, they could, in course of time, evolve an ideal Hindustani and that would be something which others would be happy to copy. At present the position was that while they were agreed on the need for the national language, nobody knew what it should look like, and this led to bitter but fruitless debate. Their ideal Hindustani would set all this bitterness at rest. Urdu had been in use there and it had made considerable progress. What they had to do was to make it a little easier and put it in the Nagari script and they would have made a great contribution to the problem of the national language. This was only one instance how they could help tackle the problems of India.

### Opportunity for Khadi

Then the conditions in the Hyderabad State were specially suitable for the promotion of *khadi*. Constructive workers should take to it and exploit these conditions for their work. The tradition of *khadi* was there, the workers had only to train the people in spinning and weaving and *khadi* would go ahead, as also the other village industries.

### Moderate Untouchability

Another thing that struck him was that the evil of untouchability in the State was not so deep-rooted as elsewhere in India. There were reasons for that. Circumstances in this part had compelled the various sections of society to come into closer contact with one another, and that had detracted from the rigidity of this evil in actual life. This was good and they could easily eradicate it altogether.

Winding up Vinoba exhorted the people to take courage and occupy themselves with work while the opportunity lasted. He did not suggest that the different linguistic areas should not be amalgamated with similar areas in the neighbouring States, if they so desired. But

so long as the State has not been split up linguistically they had this opportunity waiting for them. And they would do well to make use of it. Vinoba appealed to them to demonstrate to India that the various religious and linguistic communities which inhabited the Hyderabad State were but one nation. It would be a great achievement and it would crown the Sarvodaya Sammelan at Shivarampalli with glory for all time to come.

The next morning, having walked 6 miles, Vinoba and his party reached Shivarampalli. Thus ended the first chapter of their journey. Shivarampalli is a tiny village. From the early morning people had lined up the road to receive their distinguished guest; and when Vinoba reached the appointed place, people accorded him a hearty welcome.

D. M.

HARIJAN

July 21 1951

## MATHURADAS TRIKAMJI

Shri Mathuradas Trikamji, whose death took place at Bombay on Friday last (6th July, 1951), at the age of about 58, was a grand-nephew of Gandhiji, his maternal grand-mother being a step-sister of Gandhiji. But that is not an important item of his qualifications, though that relationship enabled him to become Gandhiji's earliest follower and assistant in public life. He may be regarded as one of the first personal secretaries of Gandhiji, after his return from South Africa in 1915, and until Mahadev Desai joined Gandhiji in 1917. Circumstances did not allow him to leave Bombay and plunge headlong into Gandhiji's work and that was one of his great regrets in life. But he always followed every step of Gandhiji as closely as possible and never failed to get his doubts cleared if he could not at once see eye to eye with Gandhiji and in case (it was not often) he was not convinced he did not hold back his opinion.

Mathuradas was very methodical in his work, and his inability to join Gandhiji as a full-time worker was indeed a great loss.

But he took his full share in the public life of Bombay, until he rose to the office of being once its Mayor. Unfortunately he also contracted pulmonary T. B. at a young age, and for more than a quarter of a century he had to carry on a life and death struggle against it, having lost several of his ribs during the period. But he utilized even his illness for a good purpose. He made a careful study of his disease, and wrote a small handbook in Gujarati (since also translated into Hindi) for the guidance of T. B. patients. The book has been recommended by Dr Jivraj Mehta. The merit of that book is that it puts hope and courage in the patient, and puts him on the right track. It also ably argues against the usual tendency of doctors and relatives of concealing from the patient himself as long as possible the nature of his disease. Those who do so harm the patient himself and also, often, the society, as thereby he fails to take the necessary treatment while it is still in a primary stage.

Shri Mathuradas Trikamji was also the first Gujarati biographer of Gandhiji. His Gujarati book *Gandhijini Vicharsrishti* (Gandhiji's Ideas) — now out of print — published in the twenties is a volume of decent size giving an account of Gandhiji's life and ideas until that period. It was published with the approval of Gandhiji, and shows how even at that early period Shri Mathuradas had begun a careful study of Gandhian ideas.

Eastern and Western philosophy was also a favourite study of Mathuradasbhai. His (Gujarati) summary of Lokamanya Tilak's *Gita-Rahasya* is a good and faithful handbook for those who cannot study or follow the larger volume of the Lokamanya.

Shortly after Gandhiji's death, Shri Mathuradasbhai published his own interesting reminiscences of and discussions, correspondence etc. with Gandhiji. It should be remembered that all these literary activities were carried on during periods of convalescence.

He took life seriously. Being the only son of his parents, like most only sons, his temperament was more sensitive and his code of integrity and sense of public duty much higher than that of ordinary men of the world, particularly those working in the political field. He was, therefore, hardly very happy in the public life of Bombay. He judged the sensibility of others by his own standard, and was therefore extremely cautious in giving expression to his opinions. For fear of giving offence, he would keep silent as long as he could. But he was too honest to seem to agree when he really did not. Therefore, when he expressed himself, however politely he might do it, he never allowed a wrong impression to be taken by his hearer. Hence, all those (including Gandhiji) who knew him always considered his criticism, whenever received, with great respect, and even sought his opinion on any important step taken or under contemplation.

Shri Mathuradas Trikamji, though not seemingly in the front rank of Gandhiji's associates, belonged to the same class as Mahadev Desai and Pyarelalji, and in terms of endearment was on a par with his own sons.

Wardha, 9-7-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

PS. Since writing the above, I read in the *Hindustan* (a Gujarati daily of Bombay) that in pursuance of the directions of Shri Mathuradas in his will that his dead body might be used for the purpose of medical studies, his stomach was taken out from his dead body before cremation. This shows how he was anxious to serve humanity even through his death.

K. G. M.

## LAND — ITS USE

*(By J. C. Kumarappa)*

Land was not used by man until late in his evolution. Prior to that man met his needs by hunting, fishing and other predatory modes of supplying his requirements. His bows and arrows and nets and traps formed the equipment for his existence. He ate what he obtained with his instruments and later clothed himself with the skin and furs of his victims. Trade was not known then. He worked for his own requirements.

When he gave up the nomadic life and took to producing what he wanted he adopted land as his instrument. Virgin forest and jungle lands had to be cleared and vegetation according to his plan had to be brought into existence. This work called for a considerable preparatory effort. So when one had put in that amount of labour one felt one had a right to that piece of land. This brought in private property in land. Even then each laboured for his own needs. Land was an instrument of production to obtain the materials to feed and clothe oneself.

Based on this structure agro-industries grew up. Even these were largely carried on by the farmer himself during the off season. These occupations provided ample employment throughout the year. Any surplus over and above one's requirements was exchanged for others' surplus. This was the beginning of trade. Both the parties to the transaction gained by the exchange.

At this stage money made its appearance as a means of exchange acting as a convenient token. But this device soon outgrew its original legitimate use and became an end in itself because of the various advantages it possessed as a convenient means of storage of purchasing power and it soon outstripped other commodities in the demand it created for itself.

Henceforth all other commodities were produced for the purpose of securing money irrespective of their capacity to satisfy human demand. Fanciful demands were created to obtain the custom of the possessors of money. The real demands of common man were ignored in the race for the possession of this coveted means of storing purchasing power.

In this setting all instruments of production lost their position as means of satisfying human needs and became the means of securing money. In this degradation land also shared. Today it has lost its function of feeding those who work on it. Both the farmer and the landless agricultural worker are among the worst fed and clad but those who have the money secure the products of the land. This maladjustment is contrary to nature's ordinance and has been brought about by man. Unless this situation is rectified soon we shall come to grief.

**Procurement**

The present Government procurement plans have made matters worse. Money nexus lends itself to the strong exploiting the weak. It screens off real values and misdirects trade and commerce. Government pays for its procurement in money at rates fixed by itself deciding by estimation of the qualities available. Here are the doors to a fourfold exploitation: (1) It takes away from the producer a prime necessity at its own sweet will and pleasure. (2) The quantity is determined without relation to actual facts. (3) The payment in money hides real values. We cannot equate the nutritive value of one cup of milk with four cups of tea, though we may try to equate their money prices. (4) Production is directed into wrong channels by this programme. A farmer threatened by procurement will sooner produce jute than food grains thus putting land to a misuse and precipitating famine on the population.

Any procurement system aiming at justice must be founded on barter and should apply only to proved surpluses. If a farmer has surplus grain, which fact is determined after ascertaining all his needs, and he needs, say, iron or cement, then the Government should provide the needed commodity in exchange and not merely content itself with a money payment based on the price of grains fixed by itself leaving the farmer to fend for himself in a black market for his needs at exorbitant prices. It is the duty of the Government to secure for the farmer his needs in exchange for what it takes from him.

**Production or Prostitution**

Directed by the price mechanism the farmer is induced to cultivate things which may have even anti-social values. He may be made to grow tobacco instead of millets to feed a starving nation. He may grow raw materials for mills which cater to the upper classes while the masses stand in need of other commodities. Such utilization of land is a rape of our mother earth whose duty is to feed her children rather than make money.

Our attempt everywhere should be to awaken the farmers to a full realization of the noble task entrusted to them — to feed the nation. Today, enticed away by the money economy, they are allowing the exploitation initiated in the industrial sector to be driven into the agricultural sector without realizing that this is a suicidal policy inaugurated by greed. Even from considerations of self-preservation they should act together to put their lands under the cultivation of articles that will meet their own needs.

From being a granary, land has now become an investment. This change in the status has resulted in a tremendous deterioration in the relation of the various factors in this vital function of providing food for the nation. The landlord attempts to squeeze out as large a return on his capital invested as he can leaving the needed land development out of consideration. The tiller thinks of his annual production only and evinces no further interest

in the preservation of the fertility of the land. The Government is concerned mainly with how much revenue it can suck out of it. The consequences are seen in our present food shortage. There is no short cut to this problem. We have to restore land to its pristine glory and to its place as a feeder of the nation and the various factors should be contributory. Merely importing food grains is no solution.

## SHRI VINOBA AT SHIVARAMPALLI

### VI

It has been stated before that apart from formal addresses at the open session of the Sarvodaya Conference, Vinoba met and held discussions separately with the delegates of various provinces meeting in groups. During the four days, he met eight such groups from 8 to 9 a.m. and 7 to 8 p.m.

Some Socialist friends also came to him with their questions, and had two interviews with him each lasting more than an hour. He also addressed the workers of the Kasturba Trust, Shivarampalli, Sarvodaya Trust, volunteers, as well as a meeting of merchants. The engagements were so crowded and heavy that he had to forgo his morning walks and afternoon rest, and devote as much time as possible to meeting and knowing persons both individually and in groups.

### (1) *April 8 — Morning*

The first to see him were friends from Bengal, Assam and Orissa. Vinoba himself began the talking: "I am not much used to form acquaintances of an external type, i.e. knowing friends by their names and forms. In fact, until my incarceration in 1940, I hardly made deliberate attempts to form personal acquaintances. But during the individual Satyagraha, I changed my way and began to get into personal touch with as many workers as possible. I begin to do a thing when I feel I must do it now. It has become necessary now to get into contact with workers all over the country for the sake of our Sarvodaya work. Even at the rate of one worker for each *tahsil*, we shall require to establish contacts with 2,500 workers throughout the country so that we may be able to spread our work through them.

"In a military organization," continued Vinobaji, "the Commander issues a command; but he does not need to know personally every soldier. Here (i.e. in a non-violent set-up), there is no question of issuing commands. We have only to offer advice to our workers; but even then it requires personal contact. But it is physically impossible to know every worker by name and form in such a short time. The only contact possible, and also the most important, is the contact of hearts. You will please, therefore, take it for granted that we are already intimate, and put to me your questions without hesitation."

When the contact was of hearts, that is spiritual, even want of communication between them for a long period was no hindrance. It did not diminish the heartfelt intimacy. Vinoba narrated in this connection his experience of the jail life during the 1942 movement when he was not allowed to write letters to any one except his blood relations. He had written a letter — the first one — to Bapu, which the Government had refused to forward. Vinobaji explained to the Government that for him relationship did not limit itself to blood relations only. Moreover, in this case both the parties concerned, i.e. he and Bapu were prisoners. There should have been therefore no objection in forwarding the letter to Bapuji, but the Government's reply was that they could not differentiate between man and man. Thus even Government could quote the *Gita* in their support!

"But in spite of our prolonged silence of three years," continued Vinobaji, "we found that the ties of affection were made firmer several hundred times. Let us not therefore give much importance to physical contacts."

The above introductory speech was followed by a question from a worker of Orissa. He wanted Vinobaji to visit that State.

Vinoba said that while all quarters were full of happiness for him, and he had no objection to go to any place, if necessary, for the time being he proposed to reach Wardha before the rains and look after the work that was going on there. With the development of that work, he would get more chances to go out, and it might be possible for him to visit Orissa also. But even if he could not go they must not think that he was far away from them. He said that he studied their language and read their literature in spite of the protests from friends. The languages of India were small, and there was not too much difference among them. He studied Uria (the language of Orissa) not from a literary point of view, but with the desire to strengthen the ties of love. He knew very little Telugu, but even that meagre acquaintance could create feelings of common fellowship in the minds of the Telugu-speaking people. "I have made a few suggestions for the reform of your (Oriyan) script, of which you have accepted some. I request you to adopt and implement these suggestions. The writing of conjunct consonants in your script is as difficult and complicated as in Bengali. There is scope for reform even in Telugu but not so much as is in Bengali or Uria."

Replying to another question from an Assamese friend, Vinobaji said, "There was a time when the N. W. F. P. was considered to be the border province; but today Assam has got the same importance. Brisk preparations on these borders are afoot from the point of view of military defence. If, however, we become the representatives of non-violence, these same borders will become the means of spreading fraternal feelings, amongst the neighbouring States, and that, too, is safety and defence. Thus, looked at either way, the importance of Assam as a border province remains."

Explaining the significance of offering one hank each at the time of the Sarvodaya Mela, Vinobaji said, "If you successfully carry out this programme and even if you get 10,000 people in Assam to offer one hank each on the 12th of February, much work can be done through these 10,000 friends. It will be the duty of the Sarva Seva Sangh to establish contacts with all those who offer a hank. It may look presumptuous to say this, but if God desires to achieve great results through small means it is perfectly possible for Him to do so. The Sarva Seva Sangh may be a small body, but it fills the place of Gandhiji in his absence. If we accept it, and are loyal to it, and act according to its instructions, our work is sure to progress. If the Sarva Seva Sangh will do its work through you, it will be its duty to profit by your virtues and to suffer for your drawbacks. Even if the advice of the Sarva Seva Sangh were kicked ten times it will be its duty to offer it for the eleventh time, and that too without complaining for its having been turned down. Today, it is only the Sarva Seva Sangh which can maintain hearty contacts with you and can identify with your merits as well as demerits."

### (2) *April 8 — Evening; With Bihar Workers*

Some workers of Bihar had been discussing for some time past the question whether they should take part in the ensuing elections. Some of them thought of advising the boycott of elections. Vinoba said, "It is true that we have our differences on some points with Government. But the differences are not regarding external policy, but internal policy. It does not look proper that we should not participate in the elections because we call ourselves Gandhians. Non-participation in the elections may be proper only for him, who does not take the help of the Government machinery of law, order and justice, even if all his property is looted. He may keep himself aloof from the elections, because it only means that he does not wish to use the rights and privileges conferred upon him by law.

"We should not advise people to non-participate in the elections. It may be open to him to give his personal

opinion to a fit individual. But the elections are a public programme, and a person who takes Government shelter and avails of the rights and privileges conferred by it for his personal or institutional work is not qualified to preach the boycott of elections."

These introductory remarks set the friends thinking anew. Naturally the friends who preached such non-participation and were present in the meeting began to introspect. In between, a friend rose to ask "Shall we return the Sarvodaya people in as big a number as possible in the coming elections?"

"Suppose you send me," asked Vinobaji, "what will happen? I shall have to consent to use the *danda-shakti*, i.e. force, in times of need. Now how can one, who does not believe in the use of force, stand for election? Of course, he who does not recognize non-violence to that extent but accepts it only as an ultimate ideal and tries to move in that direction gradually may be nominated for election."

*Q.*: Why should the Sarva Seva Sangh people not stand for the elections?

*Vinoba*: Who will elect them? Suppose, I stand for election. I will ask the people that they should not keep the army. Who will then vote for me? It is one thing to listen to my teachings. People may get up even at 4 a.m. on my advice, but who will take the risk of electing me, who will disband all force? I shall have to face a very heavy defeat if I stand!

The atmosphere was filled with laughter. A sort of relief for the present and a definite guidance for the future could be read in between the lines of the reply. A few more questions followed. "They all speak about the distribution of land, will it help production?"

*Vinoba*: There is a little confused thinking here. It is not proper that a thing like land should be possessed but by a few. This is irrespective of increase of production, which it may be possible to achieve even without distribution of land. You may contend that the incentive to work is weak unless one possesses sufficient land. But experience shows that the best results are achieved through small holdings. As a matter of fact, that is exactly the argument of the small holders against the big ones. My contention is that every one is entitled to land as he is to air and water; whosoever asks for it, should get it, according to his quota. Government would say, your quota is for only 1/10th of an acre; you cannot have more. In that case, they would have to reorganize the present cities and plan the villages properly and every one would have to be asked to cultivate land.

*Q.*: But how will you make the land available?

*Vinoba*: By legislation. That work is not difficult.

*Q.*: The experience is otherwise. Don't you see how difficult it is to pass legislation? — The suggestion was that after assuming power, the Congress ministers had lost their zeal in the matter and had adopted a reactionary attitude.

*Vinoba*: It is the limitation of the Chair. The professor while definining a point says it has neither length nor breadth. But when he draws the point on the board he has got to make it big enough so that the whole class can see it. I know there are difficulties in the path of making a law. The crux of the whole problem is Defence. All our energies are diverted at present towards the maintenance of the army. There are no resources left to enable other things to be taken up. Unless therefore we find a solution to this, and decide that we do not need so much army and that we can carry on our work with the minimum force, peace is an impossibility. This is possible only when India and Pakistan mutually agree not to fight any more.

*Q.*: Some of the land-holders possess more than 10,000 acres; how shall we acquire land from them, and how may we distribute it?

*Vinoba*: What has Kashmir done? That which is possible there should also be possible here.

*Q.*: Bihar has made a great contribution in the field of *khadi*. Who does not know Madhubani's fine products? What should be our policy now as regard *khadi* work? Shall we carry on the work on self-sufficiency lines, or as an occupation giving a living wage?

*Vinoba*: "When the question is put to me about wages in *khadi* production, my answer is that the Charkha Sangh is gone mad that it goes on paying wages. It is un-understandable how spinning can give food. It is only land cultivation that can give food. Spinning can give us only cloth." Vinoba suggested that the consideration of the spinning labour from the point of view of wages in terms of money was fundamentally erroneous. The crores of India must produce their own cloth, even as they must till their lands and grow their food.

The last question about Satyagraha was no less important. What do you think about offering Satyagraha if and when necessary?

And straight came the reply: "It is only on moral issues that the question of Satyagraha can arise today. When the Government belongs to you and you are the makers of law it should be possible for you to resolve all your problems with the help of the law."

Parandham, Paunar, 6-7-'51 D. M.

## HIMALAYAN LESSONS

## VI

### Lat Sahib Ki Kothi

I had pleaded for some place outside the town and so the authorities had very kindly arranged for us to be put up at the Simlasu Rest House, one mile above Tehri town, on the left bank of the Bhilangana River. The local population knew it as *Lat Sahib Ki Kothi* (the Lord Sahib's House), as it was built by the late Maharaja's father for the reception of the English Lord. So we had progressed from a buffalo-shed to the Lord Sahib's House! But no sooner did we get into that grandeur than my heart began to yearn for Bhona Bagi up there on the mountain ridge amongst the cattle and the peasants. Nevertheless, I resigned myself to the circumstances, helpful as they were for putting my health in order. The sojourn here also enabled us to come in close contact with the administrative centre of the State, just recently merged into Uttar Pradesh as a new district. This was of considerable value for understanding the conditions which we had been studying day by day during our wanderings. However, before reviewing our general experiences, let me reach the end of the story.

### Back to Bhona Bagi

As the days went by I became more and more restless in the Lord Sahib's House. In such surroundings, no matter how much one may try to avoid it, an insurmountable barrier rises up between oneself and the people. No amount of explaining will remove the estranging effect of such buildings. What a tragedy it is that our leaders think it necessary to live in such, and much grander edifices! It is not raising prestige by a hair's breadth, but on the contrary, is dragging it down day by day.

Since I was determined to get away as soon as possible, messages were sent to the owner of the little lone shop at Bhona Bagi to try and put his roof in order, and as soon as we heard that he had done so, we set out again with bag and baggage. It was as steep and stony a path as the

one from Chamba Khal to Kaudia, only nearly twice as long! There being no horse available, I made do with an old mule. My health was only so so, but the joy of getting off to the countryside sustained me.

For the last four or five days there had been hardly any rain, and it appeared as if the monsoon were ending. We arrived in the late afternoon. The friendly weather-beaten faces of the peasants were there to greet us. The little building had been freshly plastered, and was looking most inviting. The air was fresh and bracing. In cheery mood we settled in. This time I had a room all to myself; a little back room which had been cleared of lumber. The small bed with the teacher's wooden chair as extension was there waiting for me. Some additions also for the others had been made by the old villager in the form of improvised trestles and shelves concocted out of empty kerosene tins and rough wooden planks. No Lord Sahib's grandeur here, and no shyness on the part of the peasants!

**Truth is brought Home by Experience**

One hears of the shortage of wood and water in many Himalayan villages, but to realize what it means one has got to experience it. This long mountain ridge running from above Chamba Khal to Tehri, has been practically denuded of *Banj* (Himalayan Oak), which, in turn has resulted in the drying up of many of the springs; and the pine trees, though fairly numerous, have all had their lower boughs lopped off. The consequence is that fire-wood is almost non-existent. The peasants go miles and miles to collect their yearly needs. We, being temporary dwellers, managed somehow to gather together our daily requirements by foraging for hours up and down the mountain sides. We soon came to realize that fuel is as important as food itself, for without it no *rotis* can be made or anything else cooked.

There was a little inferior water nearby during the rains, but drinking water had to be fetched from a small spring some two furlongs down a precipitous path. By the end of October the nearby water dries up. Then for all needs people have to go down to the lower spring which gets weaker and weaker as the dry season advances. Town people living in houses with water laid on, and even country folks with wells nearby, can have no idea what such permanent water shortage means.

It is such experiences that bring home to one the real needs of vast masses of our people, and if only those in power would spend a little of their lives in the back-of-beyond villages our development schemes would be more sensible.

**The Rain Wins**

After some days the clouds again began to threaten. "What does it matter," we said, "our roof is now water-proof". But we were soon disillusioned! The rain came down in torrents, not for one day, but for several days and nights, and the water came through the roof in all directions, especially in my room. By squeezing my bed into a corner and covering one end with a mackintosh I managed to keep my bedding dry, but the rest of the room became soaking wet, and the floor a quagmire of sticky mud. When the rain at last stopped the weather turned chilly. My room became so damp and cold, that its darkness began to eat into my bones. After some days my health started to go wrong. I moved into the front of the old shop which was the only comparatively dry place left, and which I had avoided doing so far because of its complete lack of seclusion; but it was now too late, my health went on getting worse instead of better, and at last I had reluctantly to decide to go down from the mountains at least a month earlier (September) than originally planned, and without having definitely settled any site for the little branch Ashram. But that was not the end of my troubles, for, within a week of reaching Pashulok I collapsed with malaria, and had, in all, three attacks during the cold weather.

Geonli, 19-5-'51 MIRA

*(To be concluded)*

**Cremation Facilities for Trinidad Hindus**

Dr Parashuram Sharma, the veteran champion of the rights and privileges of Indians abroad, had written a note in *Harijan* of 9-10-'49 complaining of the compulsion on the Hindus of Trinidad to bury their dead instead of burning them as in India. For several years the local Hindus had carried on an unsuccessful agitation. He now informs that "the new Government with responsible ministers have acceded to the request of the Hindus of Trinidad to cremate their dead on the open pyre, and a law in this behalf is being drafted. Other colonies on that side, it is understood, will soon be following in the footsteps of Trinidad." The Government of Trinidad deserves thanks of the Hindus for thus respecting their sentiments. I hope other colonies will, as the Doctor believes, extend the same concession.

Wardha, 5-7-'51 K. G. M.

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